

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

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FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

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INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAMAKO 648

EO 11652: XGDS-1,

TAGS: PINS, PINT, ML

SUBJ: BLEAK PROSPECTS FOR MALI-A SENEGALESE VIEW

SUMMARY: SENEGALESE AMBASSADOR TO MALI BELIEVES ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION HERE IS DETERIORATING TO THE POINT WHERE ANOTHER COUP IS CONCEIVABLE. HE FEARS A MOVE BY MALI TOWARD THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ALTERIA-MALI-GUINEA AXIS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SENEGALESE AMBASSADOR TO MALI, M'BAYE DIOUF, CALLED ON ME FEB. 19, AT HIS REQUEST, TO DISCUSS HIS VIEW THAT THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN MALI IS DETERIORATING RAPIDLY. HE SAID THAT THE COUNTRY IS COMPLETELY BANKRUPT, CIVIL SERVANTS HAVE NOT BEEN PAID FOR TWO MONTHS. PRICES FOR THE MAN IN THE STREET CONTINUE TO RISE AND, ACCORDING TO HIS CONTACTS IN THE EXTENSIVE SENEGALESE COMMUNITY IN BAMAKO, THERE IS WIDE-SPREAD DISCONTENT IN THE POPULATION. HE NOTED THAT HARVEST

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WAS VERY GOOD THIS YEAR AND THAT MALI HAS AN EXPORTABLE

SURPLUS OF RICE AND MILLET, WHICH THEY HAD OFFERED TO SENEGAL. HE SAID THE GOS WAS WILLING TO HELP MALI OUT BUT THAT THE PRICE WAS SO FAR TOO HIGH. IN SPITE OF THIS GOOD HARVEST, HOWEVER, THE COUNTRY WAS GOING EVER DEEPER IN DEBT, IN PART BECAUSE OF WIDE-SPREAD CORRUPTION IN THE CUSTOMS SERVICE WHICH DID NOT TRANSFER CUSTOMS RECEIPTS TO THE TREASURY. HE REFERRED TO THE FRANCO-MALIAN FINANCIAL DISCUSSIONS SAYING THAT IT WAS HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT THE FRENCH WERE DEMANDING SIGNIFICANT REFORMS AS A PRICE FOR THEIR CONTINUED BUDGETARY AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE SUPPORT. HE SAID HE DOUBTED IF THE MALIANS COULD OR WOULD UNDERTAKE THE MEASURES NECESSARY TO MEET THE FRENCH REQUIREMENTS.

2. COMMENTING THAT HE FELT THAT THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION HAD DETERIORATED MARKEDLY SINCE THE CABINET RESHUFFLE LAST SEPTEMBER, HE SAID HE BELIEVED THAT, AT THE VERY LEAST, ANOTHER CABINET RESHUFFLE WAS IN THE CARDS OR PERHAPS EVEN A CHANGE IN THE REGIME. CLEARLY, HE SAID, THE PRESENT SITUATION CANNOT CONTINUE, THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO DO SOMETHING FOR THE MAN IN THE STREET. THE MALIANS WERE PATIENT PEOPLE HE SAID, BUT WHEN THE EXPLOSION DOES COME IT WILL BE VIOLENT. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION AS TO WHERE AN ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE REGIME MIGHT COME FROM, HE SAID DOUBTLESS FROM SOME, AT PRESENT UNKNOWN, MILITARY OFFICER AT THE LIEUTENANT LEVEL. HE AGREED WITH MY OBSERVATION THAT THE MALIAN SECURITY SERVICE WAS VERY EFFICIENT, BUT SAID THAT HE FELT THAT THE MILITARY COMMITTEE WAS NO LONGER IN TOUCH WITH THE FEELINGS OF THE PEOPLE.

3. HE THEN SAID THAT HE AND PRESIDENT SENGHOR WERE VERY CONCERNED THAT MALI MIGHT SLIDE TOWARD THE EAST. HE NOTED THAT MANY OF THE YOUNGER MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN TRAINED IN MOSCOW, MENTIONING SPECIFICALLY THE MINISTER OF FINANCE, FOUNEKE KEITA, AND THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE, ALIDOU TOURE. HE THEN SAID THAT THE PRESENT ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR TO MALI, MUSTAPHA BENEMAR, WAS BEING VERY ACTIVE IN TRYING TO PUSH MALI TOWARD A MORE RADICAL POSITION. HE SAID THAT BENEMAR WAS DEVELOPING A WIDE

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FOLLOWING AMONG THE YOUNGER MOSCOW-TRAINED FUNCTIONNAIRES, NOTING THAT HE WAS PARTICULARLY CLOSE TO ALIDOU TOURE. HE DESCRIBED TOURE AS BEING THE MOST DANGEROUS MAN FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE WEST IN THE ENTIRE MALIAN GOVERNMENT (WE SHARE THIS VIEW), SAYING THAT HE HIMSELF COULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH HIM: QTE HE DOESN'T LIKE ME AND I DON'T LIKE HIM. END QTE. HE REFERRED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN

ALGERIA-MALI-GUINEA AXIS, SAYING IT WAS VIRTUALLY A FACT ALREADY, AND WOULD HAVE SERIOUS POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR ALL OF WEST AFRICA. HE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE SOVIETS WERE VERY INTERESTED IN MALI, BUT THE CHINESE LESS SO. HE CONCLUDED THAT IN ORDER TO SAVE THE COUNTRY THE MALIANS WOULD SELL THEMSELVES TO THE DEVIL, AND WE KNEW WHO THE DEVIL WAS (THE SOVIETS), AND HE KNEW WHO THE MEPHISTOPHELES WAS, AMBASSADOR BENEMAR.

COMMENT: AMBASSADOR DIOUF IS A HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, EDUCATED, AND ARTICULATE MAN. HE IS NOT A PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMAT, HAVING SERVED AS THE GOVERNOR OF SEVERAL PROVINCES IN SENEGAL. HE HAS HOWEVER, A BROADBASE OF CONTACTS IN THE SENEGALESE COMMUNITY HERE AND IS, THEREFORE, IN AN EXCELLENT POSITION TO ASSESS THE MOOD OF THE POPULATION.

4. HIS ANALYSIS OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN MALI IS VERY CLOSE TO OURS. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT RUMORS OF A MAJOR CABINET SHUFFLE OR A COUP ARE AGAIN SURFACING, BUT SUCH RUMORS HAVE BEEN PERENNIAL DURING MY STAY HERE, AND IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO ASSESS THEM. NONETHELESS, THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IS DETERIORATING, THAT THE EFFICIENCY OF GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION HAS DECLINED, AND THAT THERE IS RISING DISCONTENT IN THE POPULATION.
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